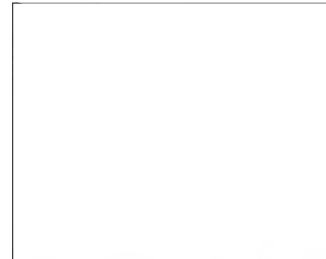


JUL 1951

U.S. Officials Only
S E C R E T

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Germany (Soviet Zone)
SUBJECT Army Mutiny in March 1947



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This document is summarized as follows:

- a) Status of fraternization between the Soviet Army and the German (Soviet Zone) population from Jul-Aug 45-47
- b) The removal of "certain elements" of the Soviet Army from Germany (Soviet Zone) to the USSR in March 1947
- c) The mutiny of these Soviet troops on 16 Mar 47 at Furstenwalde Station
- d) The repressive measures taken by the Soviet Army under Marshal Sokolovskiy

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THE MARSHAL PUT DOWN THE REBELLION

(The Mutiny in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany in 1947)

Background:

The regime of relative personal freedom, established in the Soviet occupation army at the termination of the war, lasted a very short time.

Whereas, at the beginning of the transition of the Soviet military forces to conditions of peace, there were occasional measures restricting the freedom of troops - and then only by way of "a fatherly warning" - such as observations that "it is not recommended to visit such and such a place," by July 1945 an order directed to the Occupation Troops Forces appeared, signed by Marshal Zhukov, "concerning the necessity of the strictest observance of the occupation regulations."

The sharp orders, brought to the attention of all personnel of military units, concerned "vigilance" although there was no fundamental evidence to justify ^{such} measures.

All intercourse ~~with~~ with the local population was categorically forbidden. The following measures ensured the observance of regulations:

- a) the billeting of troops away from populated areas or in quarters from which the Germans had been evacuated.
- b) the transfer of all personnel (independent of ranks and position) to barracks.
- c) the prohibition (regardless of the length of time) of absence of military and civilian personnel from the billeting area without the special permission of the commander. An officer, not to mention rank-and-file and sergeants, wishing to receive a pass, was required to explain the reason for needing a pass and to furnish the exact address of his residence while absent. All military personnel were required to be in the billeting area by 2300 hours. For a breach of the order, there was immediate punishment. In

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particular, soldiers and ~~who~~ guilty of fraternizing with the local population were subject to transfer to the disciplinary battalions, and officers appeared before a court-martial, with the subsequent possibility of dismissal and loss of rank.

According to the policy of the Political Administration of the Occupation Forces, directives were circulated informing all military units of the need for strict observance of the order and the obligation to inform the command about every violation, however small. Corresponding instructions for the implementation of the order were received by the Special Sections of the military units and the special agents of SMERSH attached to the military units. *

On 14 - 16 August, 1945 a "combing of the territory" was carried out by all command organs and SMERSH in the populated places of the Eastern Zone, manifesting itself in a general evening and night raid on German dwellings. This measure ^{was} officially interpreted as "rooting out" of hidden S.S. men and other Nazi elements." In reality, it was aimed at uncovering cases of forbidden "fraternization with the population." As a result of the "search," there was a large number of arrests and detentions of Soviet servicemen discovered during the search of German dwellings (the arrests took place regardless of the nature of conduct of the servicemen), with subsequent investigation of the culprits in their military units.

Such "combings" were repeated throughout the winter of 1945-46, each time "in total secrecy," in order to take the servicemen by surprise.

During the winter, panic grew among the troops of the Occupation

* The author has considered it necessary to discuss the above-mentioned order in detail, because of its significance for all organizations of the "occupation regime." This order, at first, was not always fulfilled, nor in every detail (it affected too deeply the interests not only of the common soldier, and the officer, but of the senior command as well and for a fairly long time there was a passive opposition to its execution). It served, nevertheless, as the basic point of departure for all subsequent general and special command directives.

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Forces as news spread about an order signed by Marshal Zhukov, in which the contraction of a venereal disease was termed incontestable evidence of "fraternization with the local population." The culprit in this case, was accused not only of a breach of the Occupation regulations, but of evasion of military service ("intentional maiming," and "malicious damage to health"), i.e., the betrayal of the oath of allegiance, with all the consequences flowing there^{from}. The order was not carried out (ratification by Moscow did not follow); however, the author of the present work later succeeded in establishing that the draft of such an order actually existed.*

With the passage of time, the regulation of the conduct of Soviet troops in the Eastern Zone became more complicated from month to month with a series of orders, official and ^{unofficial} instructions disseminated throughout the command of the Commander-in-chief of the Occupation Forces, through that of the Commander-in-chief of the Soviet Military Administration,** through the Political Administration of the SVAG [Soviet Military Administration of Germany] the Central Commandatura, and finally the MVD and SMERSH.

Servicemen and their families were strictly forbidden to visit German theatres, movie houses, restaurants, hotels, and the "black market." Already in 1945-46, in addition to "fraternization with the population," association with representatives of former military allies became subject to penalty. Thus, for example, Major K. was reduced in rank and sentenced to a five-year term of imprisonment for an unauthorized trip to the western Zone as a guest of an American officer friend. (No criminal or political element in the action was established). Officers F. and G. were arrested by SMERSH organs for a chance meeting and a short friendly conversation in a restaurant with [] troops. After lengthy inquests, both officers were transferred to military units in Russia.

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* Testimony of a member of the Military Soviet of the 1st Belorussian front and, later, administrative worker in the Soviet Military administration in Germany, Lieut. Gen. Bokov.

** The official title of Marshals Zhukov and Sokolovskiy, and General of the Army Chuykov.

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There followed at the beginning of 1947, the order of Marshal Sokolobskiy forbidding servicemen and their families, as well as civilian officials of SVAG, to visit the western sector of Berlin. Those found guilty of such visits, regardless of their intentions, were subject to removal to Russia, where, for officers "who had made a slip," there were special, remote, service bases at Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands.

At approximately the same time (the second half of 1947), employees of the central and provincial administrations of SVAG and of the Central Command, who were formerly in a privileged position, were deprived of the right of living in private (German) apartments, participating in German-Soviet joint-stock companies, etc. They were all obliged to move to special zones so-called "cantonments" (gorodki) which were forbidden to Germans, where bachelors were quartered two and three to a room, so that they might more easily, "keep an eye on one another."

The number of Command patrols on the streets of populated areas was increased, and the western sector of Berlin swarmed with MVD men in civilian clothes. And, later, as is well known, a crescendo followed—the Berlin blockade, open conflict with the former allies, unlimited intensification of vigilance and hostility toward everything capitalistic.

More and more frequently, and on a greater scale, special trains were made up to transport to the Soviet Union those guilty of violating the "Occupation Regulations."

It is natural, that as a result of all the briefly enumerated "political-educational," disciplinary, and punitive measures, a mood of protest grew and became increasingly strong among the troops of the Soviet occupation army, especially among groups and persons, guilty of breaching this or that order, who grew more numerous with each passing day. A clear example of the explosion of such a mood appears in the case cited below, which occurred on the eve of the "cold war."

The Circumstances and Substance of the Event

Over a period of several days in March, 1947, in the region of the

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Erkner Station (near Berlin), a railroad transport was formed ~~up~~ for dispatch to the USSR. The passengers of this transport were servicemen of various ranks (the majority were common soldiers) from various units, who were being forcibly removed, according to order, to the motherland. The "shtrafiki" [penalized persons] as the passengers called themselves, for the most part, did not know the location of their new service destination, nor, in general, very much about their final fate. "We are going a little further east; to the Aleutians," they gloomily replied when questioned.

A part of the passengers came "voluntarily" in individual fashion, to the entrainment and were allowed to choose their seats in the cars. Another part, 340 persons, transported as convicts had been brought from Berlin in trucks, conveyed by Command personnel, and were put in six freight "pullmans" set apart for them. The doors of these cars were supposed to have been shut immediately which, be it said, was not done in this case, and later served as grounds for a charge of lack of vigilance, leading to subsequent mutiny against the chief of the echelon. At the entrance to a "pullman," an armed guard was stationed.

At 1430 hours on the 16th of March, the train, carrying approximately 600 passengers, left Erkner station bound for Frankfurt-on-the-Oder in the Fürstenwalde district (the German-Polish frontier). A small detachment from the Central Berlin Commandatura, numbering ten men, accompanied the train: one officer (echelon leader), two sergeants and seven privates. The command was disposed in the last car of the train; the soldiers guarded the cars containing the "stagers" [convicts] in turn. The detachments' equipment numbered two automatic and six rifles, with the usual supply of cartridges, not counting the personal arms of the echelon leader.

At 1745 hours, a telephone message arrived at the office of the Commandant of Giesla Station (Soviet sector of Berlin) from the commandant of Fürstenwalde Station to the effect that the echelon arriving 1620 hours had mutinied and a group of ringleaders had escaped in two cars in the direction of the city of Frankfurt, using a locomotive which they had detached

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from a German train as a means of conveyance; the remainder ~~of the~~ of the mob of soldiers were still rioting in the station; it was urgently requested that re-enforcements be sent. The commandant of the station explained the belated dispatch of the telephone message by the "physical impossibility" of making it earlier; he had been seized by the rioters, who threatened his life.

The facts of the matter appear to be as follows: en route to the Fürstenwalde Station, the people on the train behaved quietly, without any apparent desire to provoke any sort of conflict.

The inquiry held later revealed no evidence of any sort of advance agreement or plan for revolt. Passengers of car No 3, where the mutiny began, Lieutenant P., First Sergeant G., and Sergeant S, subsequently said: "During the trip, we did not think of such actions, nor did we speak of such a thing. Naturally, the trip was not welcome and we talked about that, but nothing more than that. No one suggested anything or wanted to beat up the detachment. They talked among themselves, more about old service experiences, about the war."

However, the mood of all was embittered, and in the final moments this was undoubtedly strengthened by conversation about the past war, and in connection with it, ^{the} unrealized hopes for a free life afterwards. "They spoke about how good it was, at first, after the war," said Sergeant G. Upon arrival at Fürstenberg Station, the chief of the echelon was given an order not to let anyone out of the cars. The guards on watch ^{were} bound to carry out the order. Until this moment, such a watch was absent in cars 1,2,3,4 where the "voluntary" passengers were travelling; therefore, when the watch (four soldiers) came up to these cars, they found a group of ten men from car no. 3 on the station platform. The watch demanded that they leave the platform and go back into the car. Immediately, exclamatory replies were heard: "Are we under arrest, or what? We refuse to go anywhere." The sergeant of the watch attempted to push the transportees back into the cars by force and in so doing struck Senior Lieutenant A in the chest. A scuffle

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began. Out of the doors of the neighboring cars came still other groups of men. Cries resounded: "We've had enough! Get them all!" The sergeant and his patrol were disarmed, and only a precipitous flight saved them from a severe beating. The disturbance quickly spread to the cars of the "stagers". They poured out of their cars en masse and disarmed the guard, while the latter made no attempt to use their arms in self-defense or to keep the mob in the cars. "They were disarmed easily, without unnecessary talk," testified Private I, Sergeant K, and Junior Sergeant U. On the platform, the riot continued with the arrival from the station of the station commandant, Senior Lieutenant Kh. The affair quickly became a hand-to-hand fight again. The commandant and the troops of the commandant's office, who hastened to his assistance, were beaten up. They, too, were relieved of their arms. Three German policemen, who were taking no part in the business but were present in the station, were disarmed (their pistols were taken). The echelon leader hid himself from attack in the city of Fürstenwalde.

The "stagers" locked the station commandant in the lavatory of one of the cars, releasing him only an hour later, having threatened to shoot him if he called for assistance from the city or from Berlin.

In the Fürstenwalde area, there was, among other, an artillery brigade which knew nothing about the affair until the end. The commandant, upon release, concealed himself in the quarters of the German station master and through him, transmitted a telephone message to Berlin.

A group of soldiers, the "ring leaders," numbering sixty men detached two cars from the train, coupled them to an engine from a German passenger train, and threatening the German engineer with a weapon, compelled him to take them separately to Frankfurt. The mass of the "stagers" remaining continued to throng about in the neighborhood of the station for about half an hour. A number, banding into a group, searched for the troops of the Commandants' office, who had concealed themselves, and for the echelon leader; some returned to the cars continuing to make an uproar and shouting abuse.

Characteristically, there was a total absence of incidents with regard to the Germans in the civilian passenger train (excluding the uncoupling of the engine); there was not one attempt at robbery, violence, or any form of coercion, which at that time was far from rare. All the anger of the "stagers" was focused on the representatives of their Soviet "leadership." Correctness relations with the Germans characterized the event, as if there had been political direction to the affair (which was also noted subsequently).

At 1820 hours, the echelon proceeded further toward Frankfurt. Representatives of the "stagers" approached the German engineer and said: "Take us to the Polish frontier." What did they intend by this? Whether they had decided to continue their protest in a new place or whether fear of punishment had prevailed, and the desire to attempt to smooth over the events in Fürstenwalde by further carrying out the order "to return to the motherland," remained undetermined. Apparently, it was partially that, and, in part, other things. "He spoke variously. Some were for staying, others for going farther. Some proposed that we disperse in various directions, every man for himself," so testified the "stagers." Some actually dispersed. About 70 persons from the transport were subsequently detained in the Fürstenwalde area, and 18 of them put themselves under arrest at the Commandant's office.

Thus, when a military detachment (a mixed group drawn from two of the commandant's battallions and the MVD troops, numbering in all 40 men, arrived at 1900 hours in Fürstenwalde from Berlin, the echelon had already passed beyond reach. The first "special train" arrived in Frankfurt in two cars, and a locomotive at 1850 hours; and then, at 1940 hours, the main part of the train came up by the same route (No 4 platform).

The Soviet military commandant and the German administration of the Frankfurt Station, at the time of the arrival of the first group, had no idea of what had happened in Fürstenwalde. However, a quarter of an hour later, a telephone message arrived from there, briefly reported the "outrages" and, under the signature of the chief of a military detachment dispatched from Berlin to Fürstenwalde, communicated the following: "Anticipate the arrival of the main detachment of "stagers"; let it pass through to the location where the first

detachment halted and then quickly surround both with an armed guard." In conclusion, it advised that the Berlin troop detachment was following swiftly behind them on the route from Ffhrstenwalde to Frankfurt.

Acting on the information received, the first steps were taken. The Frankfurt commandant, Colonel Korzhukov, detailed 25 soldiers to the station commandant's office, and 25 German policemen were attached to them as supplement. Shortly, notice of the arrival of the "stagers" was received. The mixed detachment of the commandant's office, under two officers, moved to surround both of the groups who had come by rail.

Until now, none of the mutinous transportees had appeared in the station area. As witnesses and participants in the affair testified, the doors of both cars were for the most part closed. The "passengers" sat within and conferred as to what to do next. When the detachment from the Commandant's office approached the tracks, where the cars were standing and began to surround them, their action was noted and cries were heard from the cars: "Get out of here! We don't want to go anywhere. Down with the jailers!"

A group of soldiers emerged from cars No 3 and No 6 and, approaching the officers of the detachment, demanded that the detachment cease the encirclement action and go away. "We are not bandits, and fought for the motherland, and here you are coming at us with arms at the ready." One of those present cried that they "would bring this to the attention of Sokolowski, that they were being treated unjustly."

The leader of the Commandant's detachment refused to grant the request of the "stagers" and threatened to use arms in the event of opposition. The group of "parliamentarians" returned to the cars and, passing along them, loudly reported the results of the talk. From the cars, cries again resounded: "Let them go to the devil! We are tired of the 'old men' and the brass.' We know what to do without them. We aren't going anywhere!" The commandant's detachment meanwhile completed the encirclement. The troops and the German police were disposed at a distance of 10-15 meters from the cars. Seeing this, the "stagers" shouted: "They are getting ready to shoot us!" A great noise rose along the cars.

A crowd of mutineers, among them two women, poured out into the tracks. "Get back to the cars or we'll fire!" ordered the senior officer of the Commandatura, Major S. At this moment, a pistol shot resounded from one of the cars. They evidently fired into the air, aiming at no one. The commandant's troops and the police were ordered to arm their weapons. "We will fire! To the cars!" the Soviet officer shouted again.

In reply, a mob of the "mutineers," 200 in number, advanced on the convoy guard to break through to the side of the station building. A number had rifles and pistols. Major S. gave the order to fire. Fire from both sides followed simultaneously, and the rage of the attacking "mutineers" reached the limit. "Hit them, the scum! Hit them!" the shouts rang out. The encircling guard line was broken, and the clash turned into hand-to-hand fighting. There were wounded on both sides. The officers and troops of the commandatura and the German police retreated to the station building. Here they succeeded in holding the mutineers, who turned toward the coal dumps, wishing to get to the city through them.

By this time, the seriousness of the situation became known to the city commandatura. A force of MVD troops from the 38th Battallion, situated in the city, appeared in the station area.

The rioters did not succeed in making their way through the coal dumps. They were met here by volleys from rifles and automatics. A group of mutineers burst into a neighboring dairy farm, taking away 64 cans of milk and cream "for removal to the echelon for nourishment." Another group penetrated the food storage room of the station commandatura and again "confiscated for the needs of the group" a part of the supplies. The commandant's troops who were found there offered no resistance. One of them whispered to the intruders: "Help yourselves, brothers. Only hold firm. . ." (The identity of the person who spoke this could not subsequently be determined.)

There was only one case of robbery and, interestingly enough, it remained unknown which side was responsible, the suppressors or the suppressed. In the station area, returning from Berlin to her residence in Frankfurt,

was the widowed former empress of Germany (the second wife of the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II, by birth the princess von Gotha. She and her adjutant were exposed to the attack of a group of unknown soldiers, were stripped to their under clothes, and, in this garb, were sent home in peace. However, the ex-empress was left the adjutants' cloak "so that she would not catch cold."

At the climax of events, the train bearing reinforcements from Fürstentum arrived, and finally, from the Potsdam headquarters, two tanks came up. A group of senior officers, headed by Marshal Sokolovskiy, also arrived from there in two automobiles.

The information received about the mutiny gravely disturbed the heads of the Soviet administration. The event was considered extraordinary, the only military rebellion during the entire period of occupation, a political scandal whose consequences might seriously reflect on a number of service careers. There was the possibility of the arrival of an extraordinary commission from Moscow, an inquest, and a shake-up in the leadership of Berlin and Potsdam. Added to that, the intelligence received by the staff of the Head of the Military Government concerning the dimensions of the event was exceedingly vague. Stationed in Frankfurt were a number of military units, many military hospitals and transient German war prisoner camps. New complications might break out from hour to hour.

Fear of further developments resulted in the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief. "Drive the scoundrels back into the cars," ordered the Marshal.

Again the firing commenced, lasting roughly another 40 minutes. Again there were casualties on both sides. The station area was surrounded by troops. As a result of the measures undertaken, with the aid of two mixed detachments totalling about 120 persons - the military personnel from the Berlin and Frankfurt Commandaturas - the 38th battalion of the MVD, and the German police, the mutineers were driven back by 2230 hours. Tanks, with their guns trained on the rioters approached the cars. Only then did the rioters return to the train. "Throw down your arms!" Reluctantly the rebels threw their rifles and pistols on to the ground by the platform. Subsequent curses directed at the suppressors were heard.

Along the tracks and around the cars a heavy guard was posted, armed with automatics and light machine guns. Three heavy machine guns were mounted on the platforms. A general search followed. Each member of the echelon, and everything in the cars, was carefully examined. Several were clubbed with rifle-butts during the search.

"All the transportees are under arrest. They will be sent by direct route, without transfer, to Siberia. There it will be decided - who will be shot and who left alive," so ran the ensuing order of Sokolovskiy.

The wounded rebels were dumped in a pile into one car without any medical aid. The doors of all the cars were tightly shut, locked, and sealed. The tanks remained to guard the convoy.

The same night the transport started for Russia. The final fate of the suppressed rebels is not known. All those seized and placed under arrest on the spot-- those who had dispersed and fled from the echelon, three were found in the environs of the town Muehlrose near Frankfurt after a preliminary search conducted by the MVD administration in Berlin, in the district of Weissensee--were sent to the USSR for final decision concerning their fate. This was done out of tactical considerations, in order to hush the scandal and to prevent it from becoming widely known in the occupation zone. No orders were sent to military units concerning the incident.

The losses among the suppressors were: 6 Soviet soldiers and 11 German policemen (the latter were the worse armed) killed and up to 15 injured; the losses among the rioters - 18 dead, 32 injured. The weaknesses and reasons for the failure of the uprising were:

1. The absence of clear-cut organization--("there was no leadership; all the ^{de}portees rose up together," was the unanimous testimony of the participants in the revolt-- the absence of a preliminary plan for revolt, the spontaneous form of the protest.

2. In the course of uprising -

- a. the absence of a clear decision as to "what to do next."
- b. the lack of precise, realistically formulated demands and slogans.
- c. the absence of attempts to get in touch with units stationed in the area.
- d. the inadequate intensity and the rapidity of the action (again, apparently due to the absence of a clear understanding of the tasks and objectives).

The initial state of the revolt in both cases, in Fürstenwalde and in Frankfurt, was of a diffuse indecisive nature; "they sat and waited," and then, under the prodding repression, there was an unorganized, violent outburst of wrath.

On the positive side of the event, as has been previously noted, there was, for the first time during the occupation, an open and highly determined protest against the regime. The uprising bore a clearly anti-governmental political character and created great confusion in the governing spheres of the Soviet administration.

The present work was assembled by the author, who was in the service attached to the Staff Headquarters, SVAG (Berlin) at the time of the event, on the basis of testimony of eye-witnesses (Soviet military personnel and Germans) and from the narratives of those who took part in the suppression of the revolt and the conduct of the pre-trial inquest.